

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (currently amended): A method comprising: ~~the steps of:~~  
accessing a central site to obtain a steganographically-encoded item, the item including at least a unique identifier;  
applying the steganographically-encoded item to a document; and  
inputting data relating to a proprietor of the document, the data being input into a database, wherein the data is associated, ~~and associating the data with the unique identifier.~~
2. (original): The method according to claim 1, wherein the document is a business card.
3. (original): The method according to claim 1, wherein the document comprises one of a sticker, résumé, label, brochure, post-it, envelope, stationary, and letterhead.
4. (original): The method according to claim 1, wherein the data is formatted into a standardized format.
5. (original): The method according to claim 4, wherein the standardized format comprises a vCard.
6. (original): The method according to claim 1, wherein the data comprises audio or visual data.
7. (original): The method according to claim 1, wherein the data comprises pronunciation data.
8. (currently amended): The method according to claim 1, further comprising ~~the step of~~ translating the data into a different language.

9. (currently amended): The method according to claim 1, further comprising ~~the step of~~ providing an audio pronunciation of the ~~stored~~ data.

10. (original): The method according to claim 1, wherein the steganographically-encoded item comprises one of a background, tint, graphic, shading, logo, text or font.

11. (original): The method according to claim 1, wherein the steganographically-encoded item comprises a business card.

12. (original): The method according to claim 1, wherein the steganographically-encoded item includes an electronic address associated with the central site.

13. (canceled).

14. (currently amended): A method comprising:  
providing a steganographically encoded item for integration with a physical  
object, the encoded item including a unique identifier associated with a network database;  
receiving data in the network database, the received data corresponding to a  
proprietor of the physical object;  
associating the received data with the unique identifier; and  
permitting access to the received data in the network database when presented  
with the unique identifier. ~~The method according to claim 13,~~ wherein the received data includes a current contact-channel.

15. (original): The method according to claim 14, wherein the current contact-channel comprises an immediate contact number.

16. (currently amended): A method comprising:  
providing a steganographically encoded item for integration with a printed object,  
the encoded printed object including a unique identifier associated with a network  
database;  
receiving data in the network database, the received data corresponding to a  
proprietor of the printed object;  
associating the received data with the unique identifier;  
permitting access to the received data in the network database when presented  
with the unique identifier; and ~~The method according to claim 13, further comprising the~~  
~~step of~~  
providing a digital file comprising a pronunciation of at least some of the received  
data.

17. A method comprising:  
providing a steganographically encoded item for integration with a printed object,  
the encoded item including a unique identifier associated with an internet database;  
receiving data in the internet database, the received data corresponding to a  
proprietor of the printed object;  
associating the received data with the unique identifier;  
permitting access to the received data in the internet database when presented  
with the unique identifier; and ~~The method according to claim 13, further comprising the~~  
~~step of~~  
providing a digital file comprising a translation of at least some of the received  
data.

18. (canceled).

19. (currently amended): A method comprising:  
providing a steganographically encoded item for integration with a printed object,  
the encoded item including a unique identifier associated with an internet database;  
receiving data in the internet database, the received data corresponding to a  
proprietor of the printed object;  
associating the received data with the unique identifier;  
permitting access to the received data in the internet database when presented  
with the unique identifier; and  
standardizing the format of the received data. ~~The method according to claim 18,~~  
wherein the format comprises a vCard.

20. (currently amended): The method according to claim 14 ~~13~~, further  
comprising ~~the step of notifying an object-recipient card-recipient~~ when the received data  
changes.

21. (currently amended): The method according to claim 14 ~~13~~, wherein the  
encoded ~~watermarked~~ item further includes an address associated with the internet  
database.

22. (original): A system comprising:  
a central computer, said central computer communicating with a network;  
a database in communication with the central computer, the database indexing  
user data according to unique identifiers;  
a gallery of items maintained by the central computer, each item capable of  
hosting encoded data;  
an encoder to steganographically-encode a unique identifier per item of the  
gallery of items; and  
an interface through which at least one user can access the gallery items and  
database.

23. (original): The system according to claim 22, wherein the gallery of items comprises at least one of background, tints, shading, graphics, text, fonts, and logos.

24. (original): The system according to claim 22, wherein the encoder encodes an address of the system per item of the gallery of items.

25. (original): The system according to claim 22, wherein a unique identifier is communicated to a user.

26-36. (canceled).

37. (currently amended): A method comprising:  
presenting a physical object associated with an individual to an optical sensor, the  
optical sensor producing output data;  
decoding steganographically-encoded plural-bit data from the sensor output data;  
using said plural-bit data to establish a link to a network address having data  
relating to the proprietor of physical object; and ~~The method of claim 36, which includes~~  
obtaining from the network address said internet site ~~calendar data~~ detailing  
certain activities of the individual.

38. (original): The method of claim 37 in which the amount of calendar data obtained depends on an authorization level.

39. (currently amended): The method of claim 38 in which the authorization level is reflected in the plural-bit data encoded in the physical object ~~individual's business card~~, wherein an individual can distribute differently-encoded objects ~~cards~~ to different recipients, to grant the recipients different access rights to said calendar data.

40. (currently amended): The method of claim 37 36 in which the optical sensor is a business card reader that also serves to input textual information from business cards into a personal information manager.

41. (new): A method comprising:

receiving a request through a network interface to obtain a graphic or design from a gallery of graphics or designs;

upon a selection of a graphic or design, steganographically encoding the graphic or design with at least one plural-bit identifier;

associating the identifier with an entity that requested the graphic or design; and

providing the steganographically encoded graphic or design through the network interface.

42. (new): The method of claim 41, wherein the gallery of graphics or designs comprise at least one of a pattern, image, graphic, color, shading, tint, background, logo and font.

43. (new): The method of claim 41, wherein the gallery of graphics or designs comprise a visual representation of graphics or designs.

44. (new): The method of claim 41, wherein the network interface comprises an internet portal, and the gallery of items are viewable through the internet portal.

45. (new): A method comprising:

receiving a request at a central computer to obtain a steganographically-encoded graphic or design from a gallery of steganographically-encoded graphics or designs, the requested graphic or design including at least one plural-bit identifier;

associating the identifier with an entity associated with the request; and

providing the steganographically-encoded graphic or design from the central computer.